Research Team Memorandum of Understanding

Conflict Resolution

Version date: Dec 8, 2020

These Memorandum of Understanding documents are intended to guide the work of the Trans PULSE Canada Study. While each team member agrees in principle with the Memorandum of Understanding, it is considered a set of 'living documents', which may be revisited and revised throughout the life of our project.

Addressing conflict

While conflict is a normal part of working in groups/teams, we remain committed to ensuring issues are resolved and team members do not hold ill intentions against each other. Our approach to creating and maintaining a healthy working environment enables members of the Trans PULSE Canada team to address issues as they arise privately and collectively. While our approach is not to normalize any instance of abusive behaviour, we understand that over the course of this project members may experience some conflict. When conflicts occur, we encourage individuals involved in the conflict to address the issue or issues immediately, as conflict avoidance can be detrimental to the project and the team.

In addition to the guiding principles and values in our equity framework. We believe transparency is another guiding principle of this project (e.g. policies are posted on the website, drafts, and other project materials posted for the team on Basecamp). All team members should review each MOU document and adhere to the guiding principles for the duration of their involvement with the project.

Conflicts that occurred outside of the project should be addressed if they have not been resolved and thus might impact the individuals' ability to work together safely and respectfully.

If conflict/tension is apparent within project teams or if harmful behaviour, including aggression or microaggressions, has occurred, this should be brought up with team members and/or PIs. Conflict should not be resolved via e-mail or text but by telephone or preferably video meeting (or in-person, if in the same location).

Dispute Resolution and Mediation

The following process has been developed to address any conflicts within the team:

1. Identify the conflict - what occurred that was problematic or harmful?

2. Document the conflict, either by writing up what occurred or gathering exchanges that occurred over web-based platforms.

3. If the conflict involves violence, harassment, or abusive behaviour, this should be brought directly to the PIs, or primary supervisor for staff.

4. In situations that do not involve violence, harassment, or other abusive behaviour, team members in conflict should first address the issue in private via video or teleconference and communicate about how such conflict might affect the project as well as the community. If one or more parties do not feel comfortable addressing the issue privately, contact the PIs, or supervisor for staff members. If the conflict is resolved to the satisfaction of all parties involved, this ends the conflict resolution process without needing to report to the steering committee.

   Details of the resolution should be reported to the Steering Committee in a timely manner via email, videoconference, or teleconference. If a resolution was not reached, team members should proceed to the next step.

5. If a resolution has not been reached, team members in conflict should submit a mediation request to the Steering Committee. The mediator must be agreed upon by all parties in conflict and have experience with mediation. If desired by one or more parties, a confidentiality agreement can be drafted for the mediator and others involved. If parties in conflict do not agree on someone within the team to conduct mediation, an external mediator may be engaged if agreed on by the PIs or supervisors.

   Confidentiality is an important part of ensuring mediation is successful. Those present at the mediation or made aware of its details should agree to keep all contents of the mediation private and not discuss related matters outside of those involved with the mediation.

   Conflict mediation should happen in private via video or teleconference. Details of the resolution should be reported to the Steering Committee via email, videoconference, or teleconference. If a resolution was not reached, team members should proceed to the next step.

6. Team members in conflict must discuss the disagreement with the Steering Committee, which will then prescribe appropriate remedial action. These consequences must be timely, reasonable, respectful, involve a graduated step process, and aligned with and connected to the impact on the project, individuals, and community.

Students and Staff

All team members are expected to follow these guidelines, with the following exceptions:

- Trainees involved in a conflict should alert their supervisor before taking Step 4.
- Staff members involved in a conflict should ensure that their direct supervisor attends any mediation video or teleconferences that take place.
- Trainees or staff members in conflict with their own supervisors should adhere to the guidelines of their home institutions.